

## BOOK REVIEW

SOLOMON H. SNYDER. *The Biological Aspects of Mental Disorder*. New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

**R**eaders interested in psychiatry and the behavioral sciences will be pleasantly surprised by this compact book. Lasker award winner Solomon Snyder, known for his neuroscience achievements at Johns Hopkins, and specifically for his contributions to the understanding of the dopaminergic receptor sites and other neurotransmitters in the brain and their relationship to psychosis, has produced a succinct and pluralistic handbook touching upon the major afflictions of the mind. In 23 chapters the focus ranges from schizophrenia to organic brain disorders, from alcoholism to sexual dysfunctions. (The chapter on psychosomatic disorders was contributed by Robert L. Sack.) Apart from neurochemical and genetic references one finds substantive phenomenological and clinical description. Because of the briefness of the presentation, those who long for more may feel that the book may fall within the ranges of a diagnostic manual. In fact, the recently published DSM III by the American Psychiatric Association may have more bulk. The two chapters covering the phenomenology, etiology, and treatment of schizophrenia are attractive, lucid, and informative. When discussing its etiology, one may more prudently refer to pathogenesis because the decoding of this riddle remains unknown. Chapter 6, with the title Chemical messengers in the Brain, covers in 15 pages the neurochemical findings which, although they clarify only a miniscule fraction of the functions of the human mind, have restored psychiatry to science. The references to published literature reflect the author's preference for the American scene of the past 20 years rather than worldwide contributions. The book, written by a researcher, identifies him as a skilled clinician and it can be effectively used either as an introduction to or an overview of psychiatry.

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